



The Association of Independent Press (API)

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

### **Internal policies and ethical norms regarding the activity of adults working with children**

#### **About API**

The Association of Independent Press (API) is a non-commercial civic organization in the Republic of Moldova, dedicated to promoting and supporting the sustainable development of independent media outlets and journalists at both national and regional levels. API's mission is to ensure the sustainability of independent media by strengthening professional and financial capacities, improving public policies and enhancing the quality and digitization of journalistic products.

The Association of Independent Press advocates for the defense of freedom of expression as a fundamental human right and a necessary condition of any democracy.

The Association of Independent Press contributes to facilitating social dialogue by supporting democratic changes, holding decision-makers accountable, and encouraging active citizen participation.

Through its activities, API promotes: public interest, freedom of expression, responsibility, transparency, professionalism, and diversity.

The projects of the Association of Independent Press address: freedom of expression, free access to public interest information, journalistic ethics, professionalization of journalists, and strengthening associative forms of media professionals, eliminating financial censorship in the press, promoting the press as a public interest service, transparency of media funding sources, media literacy for various target groups etc.

The Association of Independent Press offers training and professional assistance to journalists and media organizations in Republic of Moldova. The programs designed and implemented by API equally target other categories such as: students, pupils, teachers, public officials, etc. API organizes courses, seminars, debates, roundtables.

As an organization that promotes respect for human rights and human dignity, API bases its activity on the conviction that every child participating in its programs should enjoy safety and protection, preventing/reporting any behavior that could harm children physically or psychologically.

API projects prioritize the best interests of the child, respect for the rights, wishes, and feelings of children, as well as protecting them from any kind of abuse (physical, psychological, emotional, sexual).

## DEFINITIONS

### **Child and children:**

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is a person under the age of 18 years (unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier).

### **Staff:**

Any person who has responsibilities in implementing a program or activity carried out by the organization; in the case where children are in this role, they are subject to this policy but are also responsible for applying it.

### **Child protection:**

Any action intended to prevent or stop behavior considered dangerous to the physical or psychological integrity of the child.

### **Child abuse:**

Any treatment that may affect the child physically, emotionally, or sexually; neglecting the child's physical and psycho-emotional needs is also considered abuse.

## POLICY

The special attention that the Association of Independent Press pays to programs dedicated to minors, thus recognizing the essential role of education that promotes human rights and freedom of expression, has led to the need to develop internal procedures that regulate work with children.

API's activities with children are based on the principles of the International **Convention on the Rights of the Child**, the national law no. 370/2023 regarding the Children's rights, the national law no. 45/2007 on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence, the national law no. 30/2013 on the Protection of Children against the negative impact of information and the Penal Code; as well as the recommendations of the **International Federation of Journalists**, regarding reporting with and about minors. API is a co-author of the [Moldovan Journalist's Code of Ethics](#), whose articles 4.23 – 4.25 is dedicated to the child protection.

### **Principles and scope of application**

- API's activities are based on the fundamental principle of the best interests of the child. Activity planning centers on the child's interest and well-being, as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- API's activities respect the interests, wishes, and feelings of the participants.

- API takes all measures for the safety of children, ensuring that neither its programs nor those implementing them pose a threat to children's integrity.
- Activities for children are open to everyone, regardless of ethnic origin, social status, religion, or gender, respecting and promoting principles of equality and social inclusion.
- Staff, volunteers, and all those who interact with minors within API activities are trained for such activities, are familiar with the norms regulating children's safety and the applicable legislation, and have the moral guarantee to work with this category. API staff have teaching experience gained through both specialized studies and extensive practical work.
- Staff members will report any physical, psychological, or other abuse of a child, whether directly related to API's program or not, to the competent authorities.
- When API runs programs in partnership, it ensures that partners also meet the necessary conditions to work with minors.

All those working with children within API programs are required to adhere to the following Code of Ethics.

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

Responsibility for the implementation of the Child Protection Policy lies with the management of API. Any non-compliance with the Child Protection Policy will be considered a serious offence and will be followed up.

## **MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE PROTOCOL**

The monitoring and review of this API Child Protection Protocol shall be carried out every three years.

## **API ETHICAL CODE FOR ACTIVITIES WITH CHILDREN**

Those working with children are **FORBIDDEN** to:

- hit or physically or verbally abuse children;
- develop physical/sexual relationships with children;
- have relationships with children that could be considered acts of exploitation or abuse;
- behave abusively or expose children to risks of abuse;
- use inappropriate language, make inappropriate, offensive, or abusive suggestions or advice;
- behave inappropriately or provocatively sexually;
- host children participating in API programs overnight at home unsupervised;
- sleep in the same room or bed with a child participating in API programs;
- do for children personal tasks they can do themselves;
- excuse or contribute to illegal, unsafe, or abusive behavior by children;
- behave in ways that cause shame, humiliation, depreciation, or degradation to children, or commit any other form of emotional abuse;
- discriminate, treat differently, or favor certain children by excluding others.

### **STAFF IS REQUIRED TO:**

- know/identify situations that may present risks and manage them (see ANNEX 1 and 2);
- plan and organize activities within programs to minimize risks;
- ensure there is a culture of openness to allow discussing any issues or concerns children may have;
- ensure staff members are responsible so that ineffective activities or potentially abusive behaviors do not go unnoticed;
- talk to children about relationships with staff or others and encourage them to address any issues;
- empower children, make them aware of their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what to do if there is a problem.

**Petru Macovei**

**Executive Director**

### Annex I

Physical indicators	Psychological indicators	Social indicators	Sexual indicators
<p>Signs of blows, burns, or wounds, which he hides or does not know how to explain.</p> <p>Lack of hygiene and care (poor hygiene, inappropriate clothing for the season, recurrent parasitosis, etc.).</p> <p>Tired appearance, falls asleep during activities.</p> <p>Frequent hunger.</p> <p>Comes to activities with signs of illness and/or does not receive the medical follow-up he/she needs.</p> <p>Pees or poops, day, or night when sphincter control is already established.</p> <p>Complains of frequent pain, sometimes non-specific, with no apparent cause such as headaches or tummy aches.</p> <p>Shows an abrupt change in physical appearance: severe weight loss or weight gain.</p>	<p>Lack of concentration.</p> <p>Eating problems (very gluttonous child or loss of appetite).</p> <p>Apathy, sadness, unexplained decline.</p> <p>Fearful and frightened of specific activities or people.</p> <p>Hypervigilant attitude (alert, suspicious...).</p> <p>Behavioural regression (behaviour too immature for their age).</p> <p>Behaviour too mature for their age (e.g. compulsive caregiver).</p> <p>Difficulty in self-regulation, severe and persistent tantrums, loss of control.</p>	<p>Isolation.</p> <p>Unwillingness to participate in activities with other members of the group or other adult/s of the entity.</p> <p>Lack of constancy in attending activities.</p> <p>Relates with difficulty, in the peer group and/or with the adults in the institution. Has few friends.</p> <p>Leads a group negatively or allows himself/herself to be controlled by others.</p> <p>Abuse of drugs or alcohol.</p> <p>Anti-social behaviour: runaways, vandalism, petty theft, stealing from classmates, etc.</p>	<p>Itching/pain/discomfort in the genital area, when walking or sitting.</p> <p>Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge or language.</p> <p>Compulsive and/or public masturbation.</p> <p>Early or out-of-context provocative or seductive behaviour.</p> <p>Explicit sexual behaviour, inappropriate for their age.</p> <p>Sexual molestation of other children and adolescents.</p> <p>Pregnancy (with or without) refusal to identify the father.</p>

<p>Itching/pain/discomfort in genital area, when walking or sitting.</p> <p>Delays in physical or psychomotor development.</p> <p>Painful wincing at sudden movements.</p> <p>Continuous bone fractures.</p> <p>Sudden vision and hearing problems.</p>	<p>Aggressive, hostile, and distant reactions to others.</p> <p>Suicide attempt and depressive symptoms.</p> <p>Presence of serious psychopathology (anxiety disorders, depression, sleep or eating disorders, attachment disorders, post-traumatic stress disorders, sexual disorders).</p> <p>Suicidal thoughts, self-harm and self-harm.</p>	<p>Truancy: repeated absence from class without justification.</p> <p>Shows little interest and motivation for schoolwork.</p> <p>Significant change in school performance for no apparent reason.</p> <p>Avoids being at home or going home or to some other specific place.</p> <p>After spending time in a specific place (at home, in the village, camp) returns worse to the activity (sad, dirty, etc.).</p> <p>Spends too much time alone for his/her age.</p> <p>Takes on too many chores for his/her age or exercises parental responsibilities with younger siblings.</p> <p>Refuses to talk about his/her family or refers to</p>	
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		<p>them or caregivers with fear.</p> <p>Wanders the streets all the time.</p> <p>Comes home alone or expresses that there is no one to look after him/her.</p>	
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## **Annex II**

### **PROCEDURE**

API must apply the action protocol in the event of any case of violence, aggression or harassment, always guaranteeing the principles of protection, confidentiality and maximum prudence.

The protection delegate (cristina.bobirca@api.md) is the person responsible for any activation of the action protocol.

API staff and collaborators are agents of prevention and notification, not intervention. Their task in this matter consists of complying with and enforcing compliance with the protocol, as well as communicating and/or reporting any breach of the protocol to the API protection delegate.

API is obliged to investigate any incident of violence or harassment that occurs within its scope when there is suspicion that it is being committed against minors, even in the case of vague suspicions or a mere intuition that something is not right.

API staff and collaborators who detect or suspect any situation of risk or abuse, either from the family context or internally (by API employees or collaborators), must report it to the head of Protection who will refer the cases to the corresponding bodies responsible for ensuring compliance with the law, specialised in child protection.

In order to refer the case, he/she will request the consent of the child or adolescent or his/her parents or guardians, except in cases where this would place the child in a situation of greater risk.

If the suspected situation is not intrafamilial, the family will be informed and will be informed of the referral of the case and the steps to follow, supporting and showing the availability of API at all times.

### **RESOURCES & CONTACTS**

#### **EMERGENCIES**

Telephone: 112

#### **EUROPEAN CHILD HELPLINE**

Telefonul Copilului - 116 111



The European Child Helpline operates throughout the European Union and in different autonomous communities of our country. It operates 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. It is confidential and free of charge.

#### **CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES**

**People's Advocate for Child's Rights:** <https://ombudsman.md/en/about-us/peoples-advocate-for-childs-rights/>

**Green Line of Ombudsman for Child Protection:** 0800 11116

**General Directorate for the Protection of Children's Rights:** <https://dgpdc.md/>